

Martin's Message



Dear Friends

As I pondered over this month's message, it struck me that many people have experienced lockdown fatigue and have probably over indulged to lift their spirits. We have seen the likes of Joe Wicks and other celebrities encouraging the nation to live a healthier lifestyle, to help with our fitness and wellbeing; especially exercise. Why then do we indulge ourselves with the eating of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday? One might argue how can this be good for us living a healthier lifestyle, when we are consuming more fat and sugar!

Have you ever wondered why people eat pancakes on the day before Ash Wednesday? To understand this, we need to look at the historical background of Shrove Tuesday or as its more commonly known, Pancake Day. In some countries it is known as the Mardi Gras, a time of carnival celebrations where the last day of "fat eating" or "gorging" takes place before the fast period of Lent, preceding Ash Wednesday. It signals the end of Epiphany and the beginning of Lent, a time of penance and renewal for many Christian traditions; a practice that has been around for 1000 years. The word "shrove" is derived from the word "shrive" which means to be absolved of one's sins by seeking God's forgiveness.

February is a time of preparation, both spiritually and celebratory. A time of cleansing one's body from sinful desires by confessing and submitting to the Lord. It's a time when one may choose to refrain from food or activities which are not seen as conducive to a healthy lifestyle. The prophet Isaiah writes, *"The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring"* Isaiah 58:11. Whilst there is no biblical teaching supporting the need to observe Shrove Tuesday, it is solely down to one's personal conviction. It reminds us as a people of God that we will soon be entering the Lenten season; a time of fasting and self-denial. Lent is a time when we enter the desert of self-examination as we journey towards Easter.

"May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

Shalom

Martin